

COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill, get hospitalized, and even die. Some people are at [higher risk](#) of becoming severely ill and hospitalized if they get COVID-19. This includes people who are not vaccinated, older, or have certain medical conditions. Some people with COVID-19 suffer from post-COVID conditions — or “long COVID”. This can happen even in people who had mild or no symptoms when they got infected.

COVID-19 can cause a rare but serious illness called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome ([MIS](#)). This is a condition where different parts of the body become inflamed. It can affect the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs. MIS may begin weeks after a person is infected with COVID-19. MIS is more common in children ([MIS-C](#)) but has also been diagnosed in adults ([MIS-A](#)).

Even healthy young people with no medical conditions can require hospitalization, have long-term complications that can affect their mental and physical health and quality of life, or die from COVID. Staying [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines including boosters reduces the risk of getting these complications.

What are post-COVID-19 conditions or “long COVID”?

Post-COVID conditions are new, returning, or lingering health problems that can last for weeks or months after having COVID-19. People with long COVID-19 do not have the live virus in their body and they can no longer spread COVID-19 to others. They may experience different types and/or combinations of symptoms that can happen over different lengths of time. Symptoms often include fatigue, shortness of breath, difficulty thinking or concentrating, joint pain and/or chest pain. Most people’s symptoms slowly improve with time. However, some people may develop or continue to have symptoms that are hard to explain and manage for many months, and potentially years, and can sometimes result in disability.

Long COVID is more common in people who had severe COVID-19 illness, but even people who had mild or no symptoms can get long-COVID. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine, including recommended boosters, helps reduce the risk of getting long COVID.

Talk to your doctor if you think you or your child has long COVID or a post-COVID condition.

See the CDC webpage [Post-COVID Conditions](#) and the California Department of Public Health [Post-COVID Conditions Q&A](#) for more information.

What is COVID-19 rebound?

COVID-19 rebound is when people with COVID-19 get better, then begin to get symptoms 2-8 days after they have recovered. They may also test positive again. Rebound occurs in only a small proportion of people treated for COVID-19. It can also happen in people who are not treated. Rebound is mild in over 99% of cases. For more information, see [COVID rebound FAQs](#).

What are coronavirus variants?

Like all viruses, SARS-CoV-2 constantly changes through mutation. These mutations add up and create slightly different versions of the virus, called “variants”. Sometimes, a mutation will result in the virus spreading more

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easily, making people sicker, or making it resistant to treatment or vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. help to prevent serious illness and death from variants, including the Omicron variant which spreads more easily than earlier variants. For more information, see the CDC webpage [Variants of the Virus](#).

How is COVID-19 spread?

The SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets and tiny particles that are released into the air from the mouth and nose of a person who has COVID-19. These droplets/particles are then breathed in by other people or land in their nose, mouth, or eyes.

A person's risk of getting infected goes up the closer they are to someone with COVID-19. This is especially true if the infected person is speaking, singing, coughing, shouting, sneezing, or breathing heavily. A person's risk of getting infected is also higher if they are in enclosed spaces with poor air flow. This is because the tiny particles that have the virus can concentrate and spread in the air. They can even stay floating in the air for several hours after an infected person has left the room if there is poor airflow.

It is also possible, but less common, for the virus to spread by touching a surface with droplets on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

For more information, see the CDC webpage [How COVID-19 spreads](#).

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include one or more of the following: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, feeling tired, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, stuffy or runny nose, or new loss of taste or smell. Some people with COVID-19 infection never get symptoms.

What if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay home away from others, and get a COVID-19 test right away. Talk to your doctor about any symptoms that worry you. If you test negative for COVID-19, stay home until you have been fever-free without the help of fever-reducing medicines for at least 24 hours. If your negative result is from a rapid antigen test or a self-test, stay away from others and take at least one more test 48 hours later. This is because antigen tests (including self-tests) are more likely to miss early infections. If it is a self-test, make sure you read and follow all test instructions correctly. See [FDA instructions on repeat testing](#).

Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare to learn more about what to do if you are sick. For information on how to get a COVID-19 test, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests/how. If you need help finding a doctor, call the 24/7 helpline at 2-1-1 or visit 211LA.org.

When should I get tested for COVID-19?

It is important to get a COVID-19 test, even if you are [up to date](#) with your COVID-19 vaccines including boosters:

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19
- If you are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 (see the definition of close contact below)

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- It is also a good idea to test before and after attending a gathering or event and before and after travel.

Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests for more situations when testing is recommended and information on how to get a test.

What if I test positive for COVID-19?

This means the test detected the COVID-19 virus. It is very likely you have COVID-19 and could spread it to others. You must isolate (stay away from others) for at least 10 full days unless you meet certain conditions (see below).

If you have symptoms, even if they are mild, ask for free treatment right away. Don't delay: the medicines work best when they are given soon after symptoms start. Most adults and some children qualify for COVID-19 medicines. See ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines for more information about how to access free COVID-19 medication.

You are required to wear a highly protective mask if you must be around others while you are in isolation. Follow the isolation instructions closely at ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.

Tell all your close contacts that they have been exposed. They could be infected and must take steps to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Give them the instructions for close contacts, available in multiple languages at ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts. Close contacts must follow the instructions even if they feel well or are vaccinated.

Learn more about tests results at [Understanding Your Viral Test Result](https://ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests) at ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests.

How long do I need to isolate?

You can leave isolation after Day 5 ONLY if you meet **all** of the following criteria:

- ✓ You get a negative result from a COVID-19 viral test taken on or after Day 5; AND
- ✓ You have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine; AND
- ✓ Your symptoms are improving or you don't have symptoms.

You can leave isolation after 10 days as long as you have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine. *

*Note: If you have a condition that weakens your immune system or if you were severely ill with COVID19, you might need to stay home for longer than 10 days. Talk to your doctor about when you can be around other people.

Day 1 is the first full day after your symptoms developed. If you never have symptoms, Day 1 is the first full day after your positive test was taken. Note: if you develop symptoms, your first full day of symptoms becomes Day 1.

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When am I considered to be a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

You are a “close contact” if you shared the same indoor airspace with someone with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period while they were infectious*. Examples of indoor airspaces are homes, waiting rooms, and airplanes. An example of ‘a total of 15 minutes or more’ is being in the same airspace with the person for 5 minutes at least 3 different times in 24 hours. Note: workplaces or schools may use a different definition of “close contact”.

*A person with COVID-19 is considered to be infectious (meaning they can spread COVID-19 to others) starting 2 days before their symptoms began until their isolation ends. If they tested positive for COVID-19 but did not have any symptoms, they are considered to be infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until their isolation ends.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

In LA County, if you are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and you have no symptoms, you do not need to quarantine. You are required to get tested for COVID-19 and to monitor your health and wear a highly protective mask for 10 days. Follow all instructions for close contacts at ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts.

If you work or live in a high-risk setting, there may be extra requirements for close contacts.

See ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts to learn more.

When am I up to date on my COVID-19 vaccines?

You are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines when you have completed a COVID-19 primary series and received the most recent booster dose recommended for you by the CDC. Staying up to date with the recommended vaccinations, including boosters, is the best way to protect yourself from getting seriously ill and dying from COVID-19. The vaccines also reduce the risk of long COVID-19. Learn more at the CDC website [Stay Up To Date with Your COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/vaccines/index.html). Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidvaccineschedules to see when each dose is due.

What is the updated (bivalent) booster?

The updated boosters have been updated to target the most recent Omicron subvariants (BA.4/BA.5) as well as the original COVID-19 virus. The BA.4/BA.5 subvariants are more contagious than earlier strains of Omicron. The updated boosters can help restore protection against COVID-19 that has decreased over time and provide broader protection against newer variants. For more information about vaccines including the updated (bivalent) booster, visit the [COVID-19 vaccine FAQs](#).

How can I get vaccinated against COVID-19?

COVID-19 vaccinations are widely available across LA County without an appointment. Go to ph.lacounty.gov/howtogetvaccinated to find a location near you. If you need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound, you can call **1-833-540-0473** from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in multiple languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1. Vaccinations are always free and available to everyone age 6 months and over, regardless of immigration status.

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Can I get medication to prevent COVID-19?

If you cannot receive COVID-19 vaccination for medical reasons or if you are [moderately or severely immunocompromised](#) there is medicine that you can take to help prevent COVID-19. The medication, called Evusheld, is given *before* you are exposed to COVID-19. It is given to prevent you from getting infected. It is given by injection to people ages 12 and over who weigh at least 88lb. For more information, see the [FDA Evusheld Fact Sheet](#) and talk to your doctor.

How can I protect myself and others from getting COVID-19?

- **Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines including boosters.** Get all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses including the fall updated (bivalent) booster. For more information, visit the CDC's [Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters](#). Staying up to date with the recommended vaccinations, including boosters, is the best way to protect yourself from getting seriously ill and dying from COVID-19. The vaccines also reduce the risk of long COVID-19.
- **Wear a mask that fits and filters well.** See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information.
- **Get medicine to prevent COVID-19 if you are eligible** (see above).
- **Avoid places where COVID-19 spreads more easily**, including crowded indoor places, closed spaces with poor air flow, and settings where people are talking close together.
- **Improve air flow.** Open windows and doors and avoid indoor spaces with poor air flow. See the California Department of Public Health's [Tips for Reducing COVID-19 Risk Indoors](#) and CDC's [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#) webpage for more information.
- **Choose outdoor spaces** for social and fitness activities when possible.
- **Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer often.** Especially after being in public spaces where surfaces are touched by many people. Stay home when you are sick.

See ph.lacounty.gov/reducerisk for more tips to reduce the risks from COVID-19.

I'm still feeling stressed about COVID-19 – what can I do?

As the world continues to combat COVID-19, it is understandable that you may feel concerned, worried, and fearful for your health and the health of your loved ones. Financial troubles, lifestyle changes and other factors may also cause added stress. Be sure to watch for signs of distress, engage in regular self-care, and get professional help and support when needed.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time coping, help is available 24/7 by calling the LA County Department of Mental Health's Help Line 1-800-854-7771. If you have a hearing or speech disability, you may call 711 to connect with the Help Line. You can also text "LA" to 741741 or talk to your doctor. The webpage <http://dmh.lacounty.gov/resources> includes mental health resources and tips to help support your wellbeing. For additional resources to support those living with disabilities, refer to this [resource guide](#).

LA County residents have free access to iPrevail.com, an online mental health resource to help with life's everyday stressors. After a short assessment, you are connected to customized support which may include on-demand chat with peer coaches, self-paced lessons to improve wellbeing, and community support groups. iPrevail is available 24/7 and offered in English and Spanish.

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Where can I get reliable information about COVID-19?

There is a lot of misinformation about COVID-19. Check trusted sources for accurate information about COVID-19, including the following:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health: COVID-19 information: ph.lacounty.gov/coronavirus
- COVID-19 vaccination:
 - [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://vaccinate.lacounty.gov) for [FAQs and factsheets](#), information on [How to Get Vaccinated](#), and more.
- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

Call the DPH Call Center **1-833-540-0473** 8am to 8:30pm daily or **2-1-1** (open 24/7) if you have questions or need help to get vaccines, treatment, or resources.

Look out for COVID-19 scams

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, scammers are still at work to cheat people out of money. To learn more about how to avoid a scam and what to do if you are a victim of a scam, visit the DPH [COVID-19 Scams and Fraud](#) webpage.